



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CCCCIX.

---

DECEMBER, 1890.

---

## THE RECENT ELECTION.

BY THE HON. JOHN G. CARLISLE, UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM  
KENTUCKY.

---

WHEN the present House of Representatives assembled in December last, the Republicans had a majority of seven, including the five members from the recently-admitted States, but when it adjourned, although there had been no new elections by the people, the majority had increased to twenty-four. A majority of seven only in a body consisting of three hundred and thirty members, representing widely-separated and diverse local interests, was not sufficiently reliable to enable the party leaders to inaugurate with confidence the radical and extravagant policy which they had determined to adopt, and therefore nine Democratic members, who had been lawfully elected by the people of their respective districts, were ejected from their seats, and in eight of the cases Republicans were put in their places. In the other case the contestant was dead and the seat was declared vacant. These nine ejected members returned to their constituents, and all of them except one became candidates for reëlection. Of the eight who became candidates seven have been returned to the next House by decisive majorities, and in the district where the ejected member did not run a Democrat has been elected to succeed him. This is the result of the appeal to the people from the partisan judgments of

the House of Representatives ; and it is no exaggeration to say that it is a full and complete vindication of the course pursued by the Democrats in resisting by every means in their power the perpetration of these outrages upon the right of representation.

The returns of the recent election, so far as known at the time this paper is prepared, indicate that the Democrats will have a majority in the next House of at least one hundred and thirty over the straight Republicans and the Farmers'-Alliance members who have heretofore affiliated with the Republican party. So great a political revolution as this cannot be accounted for by the stereotyped statements that it was an " off year " and a full vote was not polled, or that local divisions and dissensions diverted the attention of the people from the public questions involved. Nor can it be satisfactorily explained from a Republican stand-point by a reference to the part taken in the contest by the Farmers' Alliance in a few of the Northern States, because that organization is itself a protest against the principles and measures of the dominant and responsible party, and if this part of the opposition had not taken that form, it would have taken some other equally or more effective. The Republicans who have joined the Alliance in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and elsewhere, are simply pursuing the usual course of men who have determined to abandon their old political associates, but have not yet fully determined to unite with their old political opponents. They are on the direct road to the Democratic fold, and they cannot retrace their steps without a complete abandonment of every position they have taken on public questions.

There has scarcely, if ever, been a Congressional campaign in this country in which purely local questions were so little discussed, or in which local party or personal dissensions had so little influence, as in the one just closed. It is true that members of the same political party have been divided, but they have been divided on general, not local, questions. In every part of the country the tariff, the proposed Federal Election Law, subsidies to steamship companies, bounties to the manufacturers of sugar, extravagant appropriations of the public money, partisan decisions in contested-election cases, the arbitrary proceedings of the majority in the House of Representatives, and the general radical and revolutionary policy inaugurated by the Republican party as soon as it found itself in complete control of the government, have

been discussed with unusual earnestness and ability, and the arguments on both sides have been listened to with unusual patience and attention. As soon as the extraordinary course of the present Congress was entered upon, it attracted the anxious attention of the people, and they watched it and studied it in all its aspects with the most intense interest. It was the most dramatic and exciting session held since the war, except, perhaps, the last session of the Forty-fourth Congress, which decided the Presidential election of 1876. It dealt to a great extent with large questions which affected many of the most important interests in the country, and, in one branch at least, it disposed of them in the most summary and imperious manner, devoting, in many instances, but a few hours to the consideration of subjects which ought to have received a most patient and thorough investigation before final action.

Such proceedings cannot pass unnoticed in a country like this, and it is not surprising that when the recent campaign opened the masses of the people were much more familiar than is usually the case not only with the merits of the different measures passed by Congress, but with the manner in which they had been passed. As a general rule, the voter of average intelligence had already formed a very positive opinion upon all the questions at issue, and no appeals to party allegiance or personal friendship could change him. The just expectations of the country had been sorely disappointed, and the wavering and doubtful voter had substantially disappeared. With perhaps a very few exceptions, the use of money for the purpose of corruption had little or no influence upon the result, and it may therefore be properly accepted as the deliberate judgment of a large majority of the people upon the questions submitted to them.

Whatever may have been the secret purposes of the political leaders and of the classes who are pecuniarily benefited by the so-called protective system, the people of all parties generally understood during the campaign of 1888 that, no matter which candidate might be successful, the tariff was to be so revised as to insure greater industrial and commercial freedom; and that there was to be an actual and material reduction of taxation, and not a mere diversion of the revenue from the public treasury to the pockets of private individuals and corporations. The contention of the Republican party was that this revision and reduction should

be made by the friends of the protective system, and not by its enemies ; but, so far as now remembered, no conspicuous member of that party was so bold or so indiscreet as to advocate even the slightest increase of taxation upon any of the necessities of life. If such a purpose had been avowed, or if the people had understood that it was seriously entertained, the result of the election in 1888 would have been as disastrous to the Republican party as has been that in 1890.

For a great many years the burden of taxation has been far greater than the necessities of the government required, and men of all parties who had no selfish interests to subserve at the expense of their fellow-citizens have recognized the fact and looked hopefully to one or the other political party to give them relief. For thirty years the Democratic party has not had full possession of the law-making power, and therefore could give no relief except in such form and to such extent as a Republican Senate or a Republican President would approve. It made an honest effort to reduce taxation in 1888, and passed a bill through the House for that purpose, but it was defeated in the Senate ; and, by way of apology, the country was told that the Democratic party was an obstacle in the way of reform, and should be removed. It was removed entirely for the time being by the election of a Republican President and House of Representatives, and the result is that the country has fastened upon it, perhaps for many years to come, the most illiberal and barbarous commercial policy that exists in the civilized world, and that a large part of the future earnings of the people is dedicated by law to the establishment of new speculative enterprises and to the further support of old industries which their forced contributions have heretofore maintained. The voters of the country have condemned this new departure made by the Republican party in violation of its own pledges, as popularly interpreted, and they will demand, not merely that this extreme policy shall be pursued no further, but that a genuine and substantial reform of our tax laws and commercial regulations shall be effected at the earliest possible day. If the Senate defies the popular will and refuses to coöperate with the representatives chosen directly by the people, then the political complexion of that body will be changed as rapidly as the Constitution and laws will permit.

The force and significance of this popular rebuke cannot be

weakened by the claim set up since the election that the Tariff Act has been misrepresented and its injurious effect upon the people exaggerated by the arguments of its opponents and by the action of merchants and others in taking immediate advantage of the prospective increase in prices. The purpose of the law, even if it had not been avowed by its authors and supporters, is perfectly plain, and its effect upon the cost of living and upon the markets in which our principal surplus products are sold can be foreseen with almost absolute certainty. The act was condemned by the people because they fully understood it, and not because they were deceived in regard to it. The great mass of producers in this country are in no way benefited by a tariff, and they do not believe they ought to be taxed merely for the purpose of starting some new private enterprise, or for the purpose of increasing the profits of old ones ; nor do they think it wise or just to cut their products off from the great markets of the world in order to give somebody else exclusive control of their markets at home.

But the tariff schedules were only parts of the scheme to tax the whole people for the benefit of a few. Public money, raised by taxation, is to be gratuitously distributed in the form of bounties and subsidies to the manufacturers of domestic sugar and to the individuals and corporations owning steamships engaged in the foreign trade, while the people who are engaged in other pursuits, equally useful and meritorious, are to struggle on as best they can, without aid of any kind from the government. To say nothing of the injustice of the proceeding, to impose taxes for the purpose of restricting foreign trade, and at the same time to impose taxes for the purpose of paying subsidies to encourage foreign trade, involves such a palpable inconsistency that the popular mind at once refused to accept it as evidence of enlightened or honest statesmanship. To abolish protective duties on sugar, upon the distinct ground that after a thorough trial they had wholly failed to develop the industry in this country, and at the same time to impose taxes for the purpose of paying bounties to the manufacturers of that article, upon the ground that protection will develop the industry to the full extent of the domestic demand, was another inconsistency which plain people could not account for without impeaching either the judgment or the motives of the majority in Congress.

These gross abuses of the power of taxation very naturally alarmed the country, for the most careless observer of the tendencies of the Republican party could easily see that, if such measures should be sustained, the selfish demands of the favored classes upon the treasury and the people would be limited hereafter only by their own estimate of the public capacity to comply with them. If the result of an election in this country means anything, if the people by their votes actually pronounce judgment upon the public questions submitted to them, the result of the recent one is undoubtedly an emphatic and conclusive condemnation of the late Tariff Act and its kindred measures granting bounties and subsidies to private enterprises.

The proposed Federal Election Law was another measure which the people did not expect and for which the country was not prepared. There was nothing in the situation to justify it, and it was properly regarded as a purely partisan attempt to perpetuate the power of the Republican party at the expense of the peace and prosperity of a large and rapidly-developing section of the Union. There was from the first a strong public sentiment opposed, for political reasons, to the re-agitation of sectional questions in any form, and there was a still stronger feeling of opposition among business men of all parties to any form of agitation that would interfere with the industrial and commercial progress of the South. The Force Bill was better calculated than any other measure that could have been devised to demoralize labor and destroy the value of investments in that part of the country; and this, in fact, would be about the only practical effect of its passage, because no statute can permanently control the political action of the people in this country. As long as political parties are divided upon the present issues, the South will be Democratic, no matter what repressive laws may be enacted or how arbitrarily they may be executed.

But while the politics of the South cannot be changed by law, its business may be ruined by the agitations and disturbances which would almost certainly result from the enforcement of such a statute as the one proposed. Under its provisions the duties of the State and Federal officials are so intermingled and confounded that disagreements and conflicts of authority must inevitably occur, no matter how honestly and

fairly each set of officials may endeavor to conduct the election ; and this would be the case in the North as well as in the South, but the situation would be greatly aggravated in the latter section by the fact that a large part of the United States officials would necessarily be ignorant and inexperienced negroes, without any qualifications whatever for their positions except their politics, for two of the three supervisors at each precinct must be Republicans if the law is to accomplish the purpose for which it is intended. It is evident that the country does not want such a law, and the Senate will probably allow it to die on the calendar and be buried with other rubbish at the end of the session.

There has never been in our history a more extravagant Congress than the present one. It is doubtful whether its prodigality in the expenditure of the public money has ever been equalled by any body of legislators, except the itinerant statesmen who infested some of the capitals in the Southern States during the period of reconstruction. For a while appropriations were made upon a scale and for purposes which indicated that in the opinion of the majority the treasury was inexhaustible and the capacity of the people to bear the burdens of taxation illimitable ; but toward the close of the session, as the time for the election was approaching, a few of the leaders became alarmed at the magnitude of the sums already disposed of, and some effort was made to check the tide of extravagance. It was too late, however, and the party was compelled to go before the country with a record showing that it had appropriated for the expenses of a single fiscal year more than \$425,500,000, and with the public admission that at least \$46,500,000 more would have to be appropriated for the same purpose at the next session, making in the aggregate \$472,000,000. This was attributable, to some extent, to the radical changes made in the rules of the House, by which the voice of the minority was virtually suppressed and its power to resist obnoxious measures substantially destroyed. But it was due principally to the feeling of indifference with which the Republican party has always regarded the expenditure of the public money, and to its inability to appreciate the weight of the burden which extravagant appropriations impose upon the people. Besides, large expenditures afford an excuse for heavy taxation, and therefore economy in the administration of public affairs is regarded by many Protectionists

as inconsistent with the fiscal policy of the party, and is condemned for that reason.

The rules of the present House were so framed, and the authority of the Speaker and the Committee on Rules has been so exercised, as to enable the majority in that body at any time to put an end to all opposition to its measures and pass them in any form it may choose. If the rules, unjust as they are to the minority, had been strictly adhered to in the transaction of business, there would have been at least a limited opportunity for debate and amendment, and no important measure could have been passed without something like proper consideration. But notwithstanding the unfair advantage held by the majority under this severe and unprecedented code of rules, it was not satisfied with the almost absolute power conferred upon it and upon its presiding officer. Fixed and settled rules, binding upon the majority as well as the minority, were inconsistent with the radical and revolutionary purposes of the leaders, and consequently the power to dictate what measures should be considered, when they should be considered, and how they should be considered, was, early in the session, surrendered to the Committee on Rules, of which the Speaker is chairman. That committee exercised a general supervision and control over the entire business of the House, and from time to time brought in resolutions designating the bills to be considered, prescribing the time during which they might be debated, and frequently limiting the number of amendments that might be offered. The bills, when taken up, were not considered under the regular rules or standing orders of the House, or under any previously-defined system of parliamentary law, but every step in the proceedings was, in most cases, arbitrarily prescribed in the special resolution passed for the occasion. In some instances the minority was not permitted to offer a single amendment, and in no case was there allowed adequate time for debate. The most important bills, affecting large interests in all parts of the country, were rushed through the House in the midst of excitement and confusion, against the protests of the minority, and often when no quorum voted. Contested-election cases involving difficult questions of law and fact were disposed of in a few hours, and in one case the whole proceedings in the House did not occupy more than five minutes. The country looked on these proceedings with amaze-

ment and indignation, and when the extremists had succeeded in putting down all effective opposition and the boast came that the popular branch of the legislative department was no longer a deliberative body, the public patience was completely exhausted.

Of course, when many questions are before the people for consideration at the same time, it is difficult to say what effect any particular one has upon the result of their vote ; but the character of the discussions during the late contest and the manifestation of public interest in the subjects presented justify the conclusion that the Tariff Act and the bounty and subsidy measures, which together constitute a single system or policy, would have defeated the Republican party if all other matters of controversy had been eliminated. Aside, however, from the merits or demerits of any particular measure, it was the general judgment of the country that the policy of the dominant party, taken as a whole, was too radical, and the spirit of its leaders in Congress too illiberal and intolerant, and that, if continued in power, it would ultimately go to such extremes as to seriously endanger the peace and prosperity of the people. It is never safe to assume that the most radical and noisy element in a political party is the strongest and ought, therefore, to be permitted to dictate its policy. Except in times of great popular excitement this element is generally the weakest, and if allowed to control in the party councils, disaster is almost sure to follow. There is a great body of conservative voters in this country about equally divided between the two political parties, but not blind followers of either, and it is they who actually hold the balance of power and decide the close contests. While neither party can afford to abandon its principles for the purpose of securing this vote, yet neither can afford to drive it away by the advocacy of harsh or extreme measures. But the loss of this vote alone by the Republican party at the recent election will not account for the overwhelming defeat it has suffered. It is evident that thousands of others who have heretofore consistently voted with that party have either determined to do so no more, or to enter at least one effective protest against its abuse of the power intrusted to it, and await future developments before deciding finally upon their permanent political connections.

J. G. CARLISLE.